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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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R 112106Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2567
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1186
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: NICARAGUAN CONGRESS TO CALL WITNESSES
SUMMARY: AMERICAN CPUCHIN PRIEST AND THE CARDENAL BORTHERS MAY BE CALLED TO PROVE THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CHARGES BY NICARAGUAN CONGRESS. HEARINGS COULD BE EITHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE WHITEWASH EFFORT DEPENDING ON ATTITUDE OF PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS END SUMMARY

1. GOVT NEWSPAPER NOVEDADES REPORTED MARCH 10 THAT PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS CORNELIO HUECK HAD ANNOUNCED PLANS TO CALL THE CATHOLIC PRIESTS FERNANDO AND ERNESTO CARDENAL AND AN UNNAMED AMERICAN CAPUCHIN PRIEST TO TESTIFY REGARDING THEIR PUBLIC ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN NICARAGUA. HE PLANS TO DO SO IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PERMANENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. HIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS SURPRISE TO OTHER MEMBERS OF COMMISSION.

2. POLOFF SPOKE WITH HUECK TO DETERMINE WHICH AMERICA CAPUCHIN PRIEST HE HAD IN MIND. HE STATED IT WAS FATHER DAVID WHO HAD BEEN QUOTED IN NEW YORK TIMES' ARTICLE BY ALAN RIDING. DAVID ZYWIC IS A YOUNG PRIEST WHO STUDIES IN NICARAGUA AND HAS BEEN IN NICARAGUA AS A PRIEST FOR ABOUT TWO AND ONE HALF YEARS. EMBOFF INDICATED TO HUECK
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THAT EMB WOULD BE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS CASE VERY CLOSELY. HUECK REPLIED THAT EMB WOULD BE INVITED TO HAVE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT AT HEARINGS.

3. EMBOFF SAID FATHER DAVID WAS AWARE OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN COUNTRYSIDE AS RESULT OF HIS TRAVELS AND THE ACCURACY OF HIS COMMENTS COULD ONLY BE SUBSTANTIATED BY VISITING THE SAME AREAS AND TALKING

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WITH THE SAME PERSONS. HUECK REPLIED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO DO THAT. LATER IN CONVERSATION HUECK AMENDED HIS POSITION SLIGHTLY BY SAYING HE COULD NOT MAKE ANY OFFICIAL AGREEMENT THAT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WOULD TRAVEL INTO COUNTRYSIDE BUT IT WAS HIS PERSONAL INCLINATION TO DO SO.

4. THE DANGER IN HUECK'S PLAN IS THE THREAT THAT IF THE THREE PRIESTS CANNOT SUBSTANTIATE THEIR PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS THEY WILL BE DECLARED GUILTY OF CALUMNY AGAINST THE STATE. IF WITNESSES ARE LIMITED TO THEIR PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ALL WILL BE ON SHAKY GROUNDS AS THEIR INFORMATION FOR THE MOST PART IS AT BEST SECOND HAND. FATHER DAVID IS ON FIRMEST GROUND, HOWEVER, BECAUSE HE HAS TRAVELLED IN THE AREA AND ONLY REMARK ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY RIDING REFERRED TO A LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN TO OTHER PRIESTS STATING QUOTE ONLY 35 OF A PREVIOUS 100 FAMILIES REMAIN IN BOCA DUDU. ONE OF THE SADDEST PARTS OF MY TRIP WAS TALKING TO WIDOWS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DISAPPEARED. I KNOW OF NO HELP THAT THEY RECEIVE FROM THE GOVERNMENT. UNQUOTE. HOWEVER, IF FATHER DAVID IS ASKED IF HE FURNISHED RIDING OTHER UNATTRIBUTED STATEMENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT HE DID, HE WILL HAVE TO DEFEND THOSE ALLEGATIONS ALSO.

5. COMMENT: BOTH EMB AND CAPUCHINS ARE INTERESTED IN PROMOTING PUBLIC AIRING OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NICARAGUA AND ESPECIALLY UNBIASED INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS WHICH EMANATE FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE. HUECK MAY BE PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH THIS IDEA. AT SAME TIME HUECK IS A TOUGH POLITICIAN AND HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF PRINCIPAL DEFENDERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. IT IS MORE LIKELY HE WILL ATTEMPT TO CONDUCT HEARINGS IN A MANNER DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT WIT-
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NESSES AS DUPES OF PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN BEING WAGED AGAINST GON. WHEN, AND IF, THE THREE WITNESSES ARE FORMALLY CALLED, EMB WILL DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO ENCOURAGE POSITIVE POTENTIAL OF HEARINGS AND DISCOURAGE PUNITIVE MEASURES BEING TAKEN AGAINST WITNESSES. THEBERGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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